



# Storm stories:

## Airmen serve stricken; feel storm's wrath

By Senior Airman James Croxon  
Public affairs

The Air Force often asks its Airmen to battle powerful forces - rogue nations, terrorist groups or militant organizations bent on our destruction.

However, an Airman recently arrived to the base after fighting a much more powerful foe - Hurricane Katrina.

Airman 1st Class Donnell Carey arrived Sept. 22 at 1 a.m. with the clothes on his back and a small duffel bag containing his few remaining personal belongings. In the last month, his life has been turned upside down.

"Joining the Air Force has been a dream of mine since I was nine," he said. "Being a ward of the state, I was never rooted in one place long so I left my apartment and enlisted, happy to get orders anywhere as long as I could serve my country and live my dream."

To fulfill his dream, Airman Carey reported to basic training and in six short weeks was off to Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. He finished the first half of his 21-week technical school and then it hit.

"We knew Hurricane Katrina was coming," he recalled. "But we thought it was going to be a two-day breeze like the previous storm - we were wrong."

The leaders of his training squadron, which consisted of more than 400 Airmen, told him to pack his belongings and take shelter.

"It was dark. I mean midnight dark," he said. "There was an eerie feeling of weight about us. It was like someone was about to smother us under a giant, black blanket."

Within hours, the full, howling fury

of the storm was loosed on the base.

"Rain was pouring down, you couldn't see past the trees in front of the shelter, which were bent in two."

The crowded group of students, instructors, civilians and families waited nervously for the storm to pass.

"I was an Airman leader, a green rope," recalled Airman Carey. "We organized details to clean the shelter and keep it as sanitary as possible."

The details kept them busy, as the power went. Back-up generators only powered the lights on the second floor and in one room on the first floor.

The only experience he could compare it to was simulated combat at basic training. Only this time the sounds were Katrina battering the base and tearing through trees.

After the storm passed, Airman Carey shocked by the devastation.

"There wasn't a tree left untouched by the storm," he recalled. "In fact, there was a tree with a second tree on top of it, and a car was moved 50 yards from its original parking spot."

With the storm's aftermath came strong emotions. According to Airman Carey, many students were in shock.

"The BX (base exchange) was looted," he said. "I couldn't believe that this could happen. I joined the Air Force to protect my country from attack. In a matter of hours Keesler, my adopted home, was devastated and then looted."

With the base so severely damaged



Airman 1st Class Donnell Carey

by the storm, further training was impossible; at least in the short-term. The students were initially evacuated to Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas until the Air Education and Training Command could find a solution.

"As bad as the storm was, the waiting around at Sheppard was worse," Airman Carey reflected. "When we finally got to leave it was the best thing that had happened to us in days."

Some Airmen were given 3-level status (indicating they completed technical school), some were told they needed to receive more training and some, like Airman Carey, were sent to their duty stations to complete on the job training.

"Grand Forks wasn't on my dream sheet," he confessed. "But I would have been happy to go anywhere when I signed up. After the storm, my dream sheet included any base where I could be useful to the Air Force."

At first he wondered what kind of welcome he would get from the Warriors of the North. "I was welcomed like a long-lost son," he announced. "Part of it was because of everything I went through, but it felt so genuine. It made me think every new Airman gets this treatment. Within a few days, I was given a place of my own to live in, new uniforms, food, even invited to a professional hockey game and more importantly, I now had a family I knew I could call my own."

By Airman 1st Class Ashley Coomes  
Public affairs

A warrior is not often thought of as compassionate or caring, but the Warriors of the North demonstrated these qualities while recently deployed to New Orleans to set up camps for military members supporting Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

Nine members of the 319th Services Squadron arrived at Louis Armstrong International Airport last month to build a tent city for members of the 82nd Airborne Division.

"We gave the Army the freedom to go out into the town to help residents," said Staff Sgt. Thane Ojala.

The Warriors also assisted in clearing debris from the streets and residents' homes.

"Downtown New Orleans looked like an abandoned war zone. The water left its mark along the buildings and the streets were impassable," said Airman 1st Class Jonathan Schelle.

"The people there were so grateful; they would honk their horns and yell 'Thank you,'" said Sergeant Ojala. "We cleared trees that had fallen in an elderly resident's yard and swept debris from her roof. She cried because she couldn't believe how supportive we were."

"I've been deployed to a lot of Middle Eastern countries supporting the war, but I'm thankful for the opportunity to help people in my country."



Col. Pete Sands, 319th Mission Support Group commander (above), with the help of fellow base leaders, gave members of the University of North Dakota's women's hockey team (below) and several professional paintball players the taste of defeat during a team-building competition Sept. 24.



## Combat Lessons

## Opening Airman's Attic

By Staff Sgt. Amanda Callahan  
Public affairs

The Airman's Attic is an Air Force-wide program designed to help struggling Airmen acquire basic household goods for unfurnished housing.

"When the Airmen of this base are in need, we want to be there for them," said Col. Bill Bender, 319th Air Refueling Wing commander at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the base's new Airman's Attic Sept. 22.

Colonel Bender also stressed the importance of the volunteers who run the Attic to

ensure Airmen are taken care of.

"The Airman's Attic is an example of the best of the Air Force coming together," said Chief Master Sgt. John J. Gebhardt, 319th Medical Group Chief. "The Air Force is all about taking care of each other, and reaching out to everyone," he pointed out.

Chief Gebhardt punctuated his comments by presenting a \$100 donation to the Attic.

"The Airman's Attic can only be as effective as its volunteers," said Peggy Walker, the family support center's community readiness specialist.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Amanda Callahan

(From left to right) Chief Master Sgt. Harry Viel, 319th Air Refueling Wing command chief; Mrs. Anna Reese, vice commander's wife; Ms. Kisha Chambers, family support center; Chief Master Sgt. John Gebhardt, 319th Medical Group; Col. Bill Bender, 319th Air Refueling Wing commander and Mrs. Sue Bender cut the ribbon reopening the base's new Airman's Attic Sept. 22.

## Base receives tree city award

By Staff Sgt. Amanda Callahan  
Public affairs

The natural beauty of Grand Forks Air Force Base can be attributed to many factors; wind, the cycle of precipitation, sun ... but the men and women of the 319th Civil Engineer Squadron are just as important.

The squadron has received the award, for 12 years consecutively, from the North Dakota Forest Service for "extraordinary efforts and dedication resulting in a significant benefit to forestry."

The base was named as community of the year for its record of continuous

The 319th CES recently received another trophy to add to their walls. The Trees award now hang beside 12 exact replicas, the only difference being the year displayed.

improvement. Last year, the CES planted more than 6,000 oxygen-producing trees and shrubs, pruned more than 2,000 trees and removed 325 dead or dying trees.

Second Lt. Sean M. Warner, a 319 CES mechanical engineer, and Tech. Sgt. Thomas M. Winkelbauer, a 319 CES electrical planner, to accepted the award during a recent ceremony at North Dakota State University Saturday.

"We're very pleased to receive this award," said Ms. Kristen Rundquist, the base's natural resources manager.

"It's great to be recognized for our continuing commitment to taking care of our natural resources and being good stewards of the environment."





# GFAFB mission thrives out west

By Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke  
Public affairs

It has been nearly six months since the base runway closed for construction and more than 300 base members “deployed” to Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash. to continue the wing’s mission. Since then, a great relationship between the two bases along with lots of hard work has made the deployed mission a success.

Lt. Col. Paul Schultz is the 905th Air Refueling Squadron commander in Grand Forks, but at Fairchild he is the deployed wing commander.

“It was a challenge at first to go from thinking at the squadron level to the wing level,” he said. “As a squadron commander, I just had to worry about getting specific missions going and taking care of my operators. Now I have to look at the bigger picture.”

That bigger picture includes overseeing the work of more than 300 Warriors of the North.

Some weeks have been especially hectic due to Fairchild’s Operational Readiness Inspection.

“Our job during their ORI was to stay out of the way,” said Colonel Schultz.

Grand Forks Airmen wore brightly colored arm bands signifying they were not participating and also marked all Grand Forks vehicles so as not to hinder the inspection.

The mission is priority number one at ‘Grand Forks West’ as the signs around the deployed wing’s temporary headquarters say.

But how do you pick up an entire mission and move it hundreds of miles away and maintain the same excellence as if the move never happened?

“It isn’t much different from deploying to the desert,” said Chief Master Sgt. John Mann, 319th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. “We coordinated everything as if we were operating out of a deployed location, except this time we had isochronal inspection capability with us which is something that doesn’t usually happen when we’re deployed.”

A large part of the group who came to Fairchild were the people directly responsible for getting the jets off the ground and in the air.

“We brought more than 200 maintainers when we first arrived,” said Chief Mann, “and we have been pretty much maintaining those numbers every since.”

Though they’re deployed, Warriors of the North still adhere to their local standards of excellence, whether in training inspections or through mission capable rates.

In fact, throughout the deployment, these Warriors they have continuously maintained a more than 90 percent mission capable rating and have remained above the Air Mobility Command standard for 11 months and counting. It’s a fact they proudly note on arm bands worn by each Airman

It’s important to note that getting the jets off the ground can’t be accomplished by maintainers alone.

It’s a group effort that takes a variety of skills, talents and commitment.

Some Airman work in one-deep shops that at home are usually manned with more people. Here two Airmen are doing the job of an entire shop back home and despite the hiccups are still getting the work done.

Airman 1st Class Kelli Tesch, 319th Operations Support Squadron works in the deployed wing commander’s support staff.

It’s a big jump from her CSS duties back in the OSS.

“The biggest challenge I had was learning the different systems they use here” she said. At home Airman Tesch would usually keep track of about 50 to 70 Airmen -- now she keeps track of more than 200, but takes it all in stride.

“It gets a little hectic sometime but I don’t mind because everyone works together to get it all done.”

For Airman 1st Class Matthew Donovan, 905th Air Refueling Wing flight records, picking up and moving his job wasn’t as hard as he expected.

“The only hard parts were initially communicating and coordinating with home,” he said. “We’ve had some disconnects now and again, but the whole process is running pretty smooth now.”

While Airman Tesch and Donovan are contributing to the Grand Forks mission directly, other Warriors of the North are contributing in a more indirect fashion.

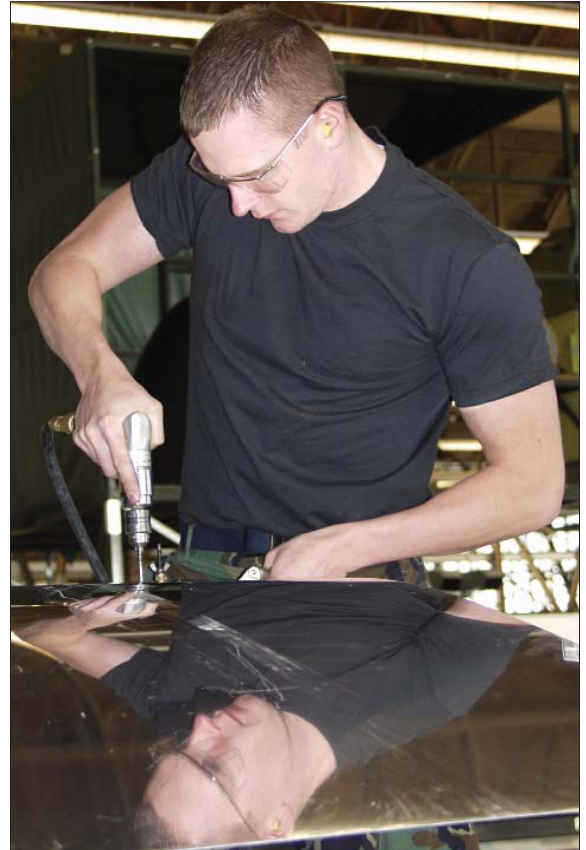
More than 60 Airman are dispersed throughout Fairchild to augment their services, which have been expanded due to the influx of Airman.

Members from the 319th Security Forces Squadron, 319th Services Squadron, 319th Civil Engineer Squadron, and the 319th Logistics Readiness Squadron are all integrated with their Fairchild counterparts.

Senior Airman Donice West and Airman 1st Class Kirsten Benson are 319 SVS members currently working in the Warrior Dining Facility at Fairchild.

“They have been fantastic troops to have,” said Tech Sgt. Darren Chandos, 92nd Services Squadron. “They have been performing exceptionally with everything going smooth since we put them on the schedule.”

In some cases the integration has been a learning experience for both sides, especially among the logistic readiness squadrons. “When the folks from Grand Forks arrived we traded practices and things have been running without a hitch,” said Mr. Doug Fugere, 92nd Logistic Readiness Squadron. “Sometimes we will just have a Grand Forks person working by



**Senior Airman Shawn Krah, 319th Maintenance Squadron, drills a template to replace a panel on Grand Forks AFB KC-135 temporarily located at Fairchild Air Force Base. Airman Krah along with more than 300 Grand Forks members have deployed here while the base’s runway is under construction.**

themselves on a shift handling Grand Forks and Fairchild tasks and vice versa. You can never tell because they are all very professional.”

“The relationship between Grand Forks people and Fairchild people have been easy sailing since the beginning,” added Master Sgt. Brian Caesar, 319th Logistic Readiness Squadron, who said that Grand Forks personnel wouldn’t have accomplished all that they at Fairchild without the help of the people of Fairchild.

“The people of Fairchild have been phenomenal,” said Colonel Schultz. “They have allowed us to be centered here and have full operational capability. We wouldn’t have been able to do any of this without them. Warriors of the North should be proud about what we have been able to do here. Maintenance, ops, and support are keeping this mission running on the straight and narrow,” he said.



Dr. Ben Clayburgh, a base honorary commander, worked at the base hospital when it was built during the Cold War era. (Right) Mr. Merlan Paaverud, Chief Master Sgt. Harry Viel, Ms. Anna Reese, Ms. Mary Giltner, Col. Bill Bender, Mr. Thomas Bollinger, and Mrs. Sue Bender cut the ribbon opening the base's Cold War Heritage Plaza.

## Opening ring of history

By Airman 1st Class Ashley Coomes  
Public affairs

"We're doing important work for our veterans while making history for our time," said Col. Bill Bender, 319th Air Refueling Wing commander during the Cold War Heritage Plaza ribbon cutting ceremony Sept. 16.

Colonel Bender and Mr. Merlan Paaverud, state historical preservation officer spoke about the impact the plaza has on the base and the community and why an understanding of the nation's Cold War heritage is important.

"It gives us an appreciation of where we have been, which gives us a great sense of where we will go," said Colonel Bender. The plaza was constructed to commemorate the dismantlement of the 321st Missile Group and many Cold War structures on the base.

The plaza includes photos and text on story boards surrounding a statue of the Warrior of the North's mascot, Sven.

"History is made by people and people are the most important part of that story. Grand Forks Air Force Base will always be a memorial to great people," said Mr. Paaverud.



## Base team applauded for excellence

### 'LEAN' implementation earns Airmen recognition

By Capt. Martin Sisson  
Officer in charge, Knight AMU

The 319th Maintenance Squadron isochronal inspection team was recently nominated for the Chief of Staff of the Air Force Team Excellence Award. The team represents both Air Mobility Command and Grand Forks. Col. Bill Bender, 319th Air Refueling

Wing commander, presented 16 team members with the AMC vice commander's coin during a recent visit to Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash.

"The mission of this team is to be the focal point for scheduled and heavy maintenance for our tankers valued at over \$2.5 billion," said Maj. William Kossick, 319 Maintenance Squadron commander. "Every 360 days or 600 flying hours, the aircraft are grounded while technicians inspect systems and components looking for corrosion, cracks, and worn or malfunctioning items."

The team has also adopted the "LEAN" concept of using processes that eliminate waste to achieve greater

efficiency. AMC chose Grand Forks to take the lead on implementing LEAN in the command.

"LEAN ideas and principles work in all types of environments, but the most significant gains have been seen in repetitive production type facilities," added Major Kossick. "The inspection of an aircraft was identified as a process that would be an ideal candidate for LEAN."

"Because of the success of LEAN, the team has realized an estimated overall time savings of 27 percent over the course of the inspection, which made them a natural pick for the award," said the major.